

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 17145

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR UR

SUBJECT: THE SOVIETS LOOK AT THE VLADIVOSTOK SUMMIT

LIMDIS

GENEVA FOR USDEL CSCE

REF: MOSCOW 16995

1. SUMMARY. THE PRIMARY SOVIET AIM AT VLADIVOSTOK WILL BE, OF
COURSE, TO GIVE BREZHNEV A CHANCE TO MEET AND SIZE UP PRESIDENT
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FORD. SINCE THE SECRETARY'S VISIT LESS THAN THREE WEEKS AGO,

THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE DISCERNIBLE CHANGE IN SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD THE US OR DETENTE. THERE HAS BEEN TOUGHER SOVIET PUBLIC LANGUAGE ON DEFENSE ISSUES AND GROWING OFFICIAL ACCLAIM FOR BREZHNEV. PUBLIC SOVIET SUPPORT FOR SALT AGREEMENT REMAINS STRONG. THERE ARE FEW CLUES AS TO HOW THE EMIGRATION ISSUE WILL WORK OUT; AS WE SEE IT, THE PROSPECT IS THAT EMIGRATION AND HARASSMENT WILL REMAIN A NEURALGIC BILATERAL PROBLEM FOR THE LIFE OF THE 18-MONTH PROBATIONARY PERIOD AND BEYOND IT. THE RECENT US ELECTIONS MAY HAVE KINDLED SOME SOVIET HOPES FOR STIFFER CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE AGAINST US DEFENSE SPENDING. AND THE ELECTIONS ARE SURE TO HAVE DEEPENED SOVIET CONCERN ABOUT THE POPULARITY OF DETENTE IN THE US AND ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S ABILITY TO DEAL WITH A LARGER DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY IN CONGRESS. IN SETTING A CONTEXT FOR THE SALT DISCUSSIONS AT VLADIVOSTOK PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE THE PRESIDENT CAN LEAVE WITH BREZHNEV IS THAT PROGRESS IN SALT WILL BE A CRITICAL ELEMENT IN DETERMINING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE'S CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND OTHER ASPECTS OF DETENTE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SOVIET LEADER WHO WILL CROSS HIS COUNTRY TO MEET THE PRESIDENT CONTINUES TO WAX IN OFFICIAL ADULATION. SEVERAL OF THE REPUBLIC-LEVEL PARTY SECRETARIES, METING IN TASHKENT OCTOBER 22, CHORUSED THEIR PRAISE FOR BREZHNEV AS THE HEAD OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE--AN ENCOMIUM EVEN BROADER THAN THE NOW-ROUTINE REFERENCES TO HIM AS HEAD OF THE POLITBURO. GROMYKO, WHO WAS NOT SPARING IN PERSONAL REFERENCES TO BREZHNEV IN HIS TOASTS DURING THE SECRETARY'S VISIT, OUTDID HIMSELF AT THE CEREMONIAL SPEECH PRECEDING THE NOVEMBER 7 CELEBRATION. IN NEARLY STALIN-ESQUE LANGUAGE HE EXPATIATED ON THE WEIGHTINESS OF WORD AND LOFTINESS OF PRESTIGE OF "LEONID ILYICH" AND ON THE DEGREE TO WHICH HE HAD WON THE RESPECT AND LOVE OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE. INTIMATIONS OF MORTALITY NEVERTHELESS STILL INSTRUDE ON THE PROSPERING BREZHNEV CULT. THE LEAD EDITORIAL IN THE LATEST ISSUE OF KOMMUNIST (REFTEL A) EMPHASIZES (AND MAKES AN IMPRECISE ATTEMPT AT IDENTIFYING) OPPOSITION TO BREZHNEV'S AGRICULTURAL INITIATIVES, LAUNCHED WITH GREAT BALLYHOO EIGHT MONTHS AGO BUT STILL UNIMPLEMENTED. MOREOVER, BREZHNEV'S HEALTH REMAINS A BIG QUESTION-MARK. HE WAS INEXPLICABLY ABSENT FROM A LUNCH DURING THE SCHMIDT VISIT, AND A SUPREME SOVIET OFFICIAL TOLD SENATOR MONDALE THAT BREZHNEV HAD NOT BEEN WELL DURING THE NOVEMBER 7

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HOLIDAY PERIOD (A FACTOR THAT MAY HAVE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE ABRUPT CANCELLATION OF THE NOVEMBER 7 CIVILIAN MARCH PAST LENIN'S OMB). WHILE THESE ARE VERY FRAGMENTARY INDICATORS, IT DOES BEAR REPEATING THAT BREZHNEV HAS A BACK-BREAKING SCHEDULE BOTH BEHIND HIM AND AHEAD OF HIM, INCLUDING MAJOR VISITS TO MONGOLIA AND FRANCE IN THE TWO WEEKS FOLLOWING THE VLADIVOSTOK SUMMIT.

3. IN HIS MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT, BREZHNEV WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY LEAD OFF WITH AN EXPRESSION OF CONTINUED SOVIET COMMITMENT TO IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE US AND TO DETENTE IN GENERAL. WE CONTINUE TO TAKE SUCH ASSERTIONS AS SINCERE, DESPITE THE PUBLIC EMPHASIS IN RECENT WEEKS BY SOVIET LEADERS (INCLUDING GROMYKO, KOSYGIN, AND BREZHNEV HIMSELF) ON THE WEAKNESSES AND PROBLEMS OF CAPITALIST STATES. WE WILL EXPLAIN IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE WHY WE DOUBT THAT THE SOVIETS WILL RISK THE STRATEGIC, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC/TECHNOLOGICAL OBJECTIVES WHICH REMAIN AT THE HEART OF THEIR DETENTE POLICY FOR THE SAKE OF TAKING ADVANTAGE OF NATO'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. IN THIS SENSE, IT REMAINS IMPORTANT TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO WHAT THE SOVIETS DO THAN TO WHAT THEY SAY. AT THE SAME TIME, THE PAST FEW WEEKS HAVE PROVIDED CONTINUING EVIDENCE THAT THE SOVIET UNION DOES NOT SEE DETENTE AS INCONSISTENT WITH TOUGH POLICIES ON THINGS THAT MATTER. DURING THE SCHMIDT VISIT THEY MADE SOME ORAL CONCESSIONS ON BERLIN ISSUES, BUT SO FAR THE GERMANS HAVE GOTTEN LITTLE DOWN ON PAPER. THE SOVIET POSITION ON THE SUBSTANCE OF CSCE REMAINS RIGID; MOREOVER, BREZHNEV IN PRIVATE (TO SCHMIDT) AND GROMYKO IN PUBLIC REITERATED AN EXPLICIT SOVIET LINKAGE BETWEEN CSCE AND MBFR. STOESEL

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4. THE GROMYKO NOVEMBER 6 SPEECH SETS A FAIRLY ACCURATE
CONTEXT TO THE SOVIET VIEW OF THE U.S. RELATIONSHIP.
GROMYKO NOTED THE "SPECIAL IMPORTANCE" OF U.S.-SOVIET
RELATIONS, THE "MAJOR IMPORTANCE" OF U.S.-SOVIET
RELATIONS, THE "MAJOR IMPORTANCE" OF THE FORTHCOMING
SUMMIT, AND THE PRIORITY THE USSR GIVES TO SALT. (HIS
ONLY SIGNIFICANT OMISSION WAS THE IMPORTANCE THE SOVIET
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UNION ATTACHES TO ITS ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.)
ON SALT, WE HAVE PICKED UP FEW SIGNS OF SOVIET THINKING
FOLLOWING THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. THEY ARE, HOWEVER,
TALKING TOUGHER IN PUBLIC ON MILITARY ISSUES. KOSYGIN
ON NOVEMBER 2 JOINED THE RANKS OF SOVIET LEADERS WHO HAVE
ENDORSED MILITARY SPENDING, THUS REVERSING THE MORE DOVISH
POSITION HE TOOK LAST JUNE 12. AND THE LEAD ARTICLE IN
THE NOVEMBER ISSUE OF THE USA INSTITUTE'S MAGAZINE TAKES
DEFENSE SECRETARY SCHLESINGER TO TASK-- THE MOST
SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC CRITICISM OF HIM YET TO APPEAR IN THE
SOVITE UNION.

5. WE CONTINUE TO BE IMPRESSED WITH THE DEGREE TO WHICH
ECONOMIC IMPERATIVES ARE A CENTRAL ELEMENT IN SOVIET
DETENTE POLICY. ECONOMIC COOPERATION WAS THE
STRONGEST ELEMENT OF THE SOVIET PITCH TO SCHMIDT AND
GENSCHER. IN THE U.S. CONTEXT, DESPITE FRUSTRATIONS
OVER MFN, EXIM CREDITS, U.S. INACTION ON PROPOSED
ENERGY PROJECTS, U.S. DELAYS IN ISSUANCE OF EXPORT
LICENSES FOR LARGE COMPUTERS, AND ALSO WHAT THE
SOVIETS PERCEIVE AS HESITATION IN CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS
ON THE PART OF AMERICAN FIRMS, THE SOVIETS HAVE KEPT THE
ATMOSPHERE CONRDIAL WITH RECENT HIGH-LEVEL ECONOMIC
VISITORS TO MOSCOW, EVEN WHEN THORNY ISSUES HAVE COME
UP IN THE DISCUSSIONS.

6. FAVORABLE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION ON MFN AND CREDITS WILL ADVANCE THE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP CONSIDERABLY. BUT THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE MFN COMPROMISE REMAIN DEEPLY DISTURBING TO THE SOVIETS. EVEN AFTER MFN PASSES, THEY WILL STILL FEEL THEY ARE BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BECUASE OF THE CONDITIONAL ASPECTS OF THE LEGISLATION. IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL HOW THINGS WILL TURN OUT ON THE EMIGRATION/HARASSMENT FRONT; CERTAINLY, IF THE KUDIRKA REPARTIATION IS EXCEPTED, THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE PROGRESS YET. EVEN WITH A SINCERE SOVIET EFFORT, WE SEE LITTLE PROSPECT THAT THIS ISSUE CAN BE REMOVED FROM THE ZONE OF BILATERAL CONTENTION. GIVEN, AMONG OTHER FACTORS, THE VESTED INTERESTS OF WOULD-BE EMIGRANTS IN PUBLICIZING THEIR PREDICAMENT, THE ISSUE IS LIKELY TO REMAIN A NEURALGIC ONE BETWEEN THE USSR AND THE U.S. CONGRESS
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FOR AT LEAST THE 18-MONTH PROBATION PERIOD AND PROBABLY MUCH LONGER. (FURTHER COMMENTS SEPTTEL)

7. THE U.S. CONGRESS AND -- MORE SPECIFICALLY - THE PRESIDENT'S RELATIONS WITH IT WILL BE OF ABSORBING INTEREST TO BREZHNEV DURING HIS TALKS WITH THE PRESIDENT. THE DEMOCRATIC SWEEP HAS GIVEN THE SOVIETS BOTH A HOPE AND A CONCERN. THEIR HOPE IS THAT THE NEW LIBERALS IN CONGRESS WILL TIP THE SCALES DECISIVELY AWAY FROM SIGNIFICANT DEFENSE SPENDING. SENATOR MONDALE EFFECTIVELY COUNTERED THAT ARGUMENT BY TELLING A USA INSTITUTE AUDIENECE NOVEMBER 11 THAT SOVIET STRATEGIC BUILD-UPS WOULD MEET A U.S. RESPONSE, AND HE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY MAKE THE SAME POINT TO BREZHNEV IN PRIVATE LATER THIS WEEK IF HE SEES HIM. THE SOVIET CONCERN IS THAT THE VOTERS' REJECTION OF REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES IMPLIES IN PART AN ENNUI WITH DETENT. THEY FEAR THAT THIS WILL ALSO IMPINGE ON THE ADMINISTRATION'S ABILITY TO INFLUENCE CONGRESS TO GO ALONG WITH IMPORTANT FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES AND THUS MAY DIRECTLY AFFECT U.S.-SOVIET BILATERAL RELATIONS.

8. ON THE MIDDLE EAST, ANOTHER POINT OF SOVIET IRRI-TATION WITH THE U.S., WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT YET MADE UP THEIR MINDS ABOUT HOW TO PLAY THE RABAT SUMMIT. MFA EXPERT PYRLIN VIRTUALLY ADMITTED AS MUCH TO US DURING A CALL NOVEMBER 5. HE WAS ALSO VAGUE ABOUT THE SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PLO. GROMYKO, IN HIS SPEECH NOVEMBER 6, MADE THE MOST POSITIVE SOVIET REFERENCE YET TO PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD, BUT IT ADVANCED PODGORNYY'S FORMULATION OF SEPTEMBER 8 BY ONLY A FEW MILIMETERS. AT VLADIVOSTOK THE SOVIETS WILL PROBABLY BE ANXIOUS TO GLEAN WHAT THEY CAN ABOUT

THE SECRETARY'S NEWEST SOUNDINGS, WHILE REPEATING THEIR
USUAL LITANY ABOUT A RETURN TO GENEVA.

9. WE SEE NO SIGN OF A MEASURABLE SHIFT IN
SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS. EACH SIDE CONSISTENTLY TRIES TO
BLAME THE OTHER FOR THE LACK OF PROGRESS AND WE VIEW
PEKING'S ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE -- A REPLY IN KING TO THE
SOVIET MESSAGE OF OCTOBER 1 -- AS THIS KIND OF
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COSMETIC GESTURE. THE SOVIET PRESS DID NOT REPLAY
THE SPECIFICS OF THE CHINESE MESSAGE AND THE SIGNALS WE
HAVE RECEIVED THUS FAR SHOW NO SIGN OF SOFTENING IN
MOSCOW'S APPROACH TO THE ISSUES. RECENT HIGH-LEVEL
STATEMENTS BY GROMYKO, KOSYGIN AND BREZHNEV HAVE
INCLUDED ROUTINE DENUNCIATIONS OF CHINA. WE NOTE,
HOWEVER, THAT IL'ICHEV HAS RETURNED TO THE PEKING BORDER
TALKS ON THE EVE OF THE PAST TWO SOVIET-U.S. SUMMITS.
WE WOULD NOT RULE OUT SUCH A GESTURE BY MOSCOW TO IMPLY
THAT ITS LINES TO PEKING ARE MORE OPEN THAN THEY
REALLY ARE.
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